United Nations A/56/114–E/2001/93

General Assembly
Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
20 June 2001

Original: English

General Assembly
Fifty-sixth session
Item 121 of the preliminary list*
Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family

Economic and Social Council
Substantive session of 2001
Agenda item 14 (b) of the provisional agenda**
Social and human rights questions: social development

Draft proposal and plan for a United Nations literacy decade

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General is pleased to transmit herewith the report of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, including the draft proposal and plan for a United Nations literacy decade.

* A/56/50.
** E/2001/100.

01-42265 (E) 110701

Draft proposal and plan for a United Nations literacy decade

Introduction

1. The fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a resolution (resolution 54/122 of 20 January 2000) envisaging the proclamation of a United Nations literacy decade. This proposal was first brought forward at CONFINTEA V (Fifth International Conference on Adult Education, Hamburg, 1997), endorsed at a round table held at the World Education Forum, Dakar, 2000, and reiterated by the United Nations General Assembly special session, Geneva, 2000.

2. In Dakar at the World Education Forum, the international community committed itself, by 2015, to ensuring that all children "have access to, and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality" and to "achieving a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy". In more general terms, but with equal urgency, these goals were part of the Copenhagen Declaration of the World Summit for Social Development (1995) and were reaffirmed by the special session of the United Nations General Assembly marking the Social Summit +5. To achieve this, 113 million children must enter a quality school environment, and almost 500 million youth and adults must learn to use literacy skills in their daily lives by that time.

3. There are about 880 million illiterate youth and adults and some 113 million children who are still out of school and who continue to nurture every year the world's illiteracy statistics. They are the poorest of the poor and most of them – two thirds of the adult illiterates and 60% of the out-of-school children – are female. Among the world's less-developed regions, the adult literacy rate is the lowest in sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia, with respective median rates of 57% and 58%; but around 600 million of the illiterate youth and adults are to be found in the nine large countries representing more than half of the world's population. The fact that the map of illiteracy continues to overlap with the map of social, gender and ethnic inequalities, makes the struggle for literacy a struggle not only for education goals but for social justice and for human dignity an empowerment. In September 2000, the United Nations Millennium Declaration consequently gave special emphasis to women and girls' education. Also, United Nations resolution 55/586 of December 2000 on the implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty emphasized "the critical role of both formal and non-formal education and training and basic education in the empowerment of those living in poverty". Literacy opens the door to sustainable learning and livelihood, as well as educational opportunity.

4. Over the 1990s, and under the umbrella of EFA, important efforts were made particularly regarding children and primary education; however, prospects for universal literacy are not encouraging. As stated by the EFA 2000 Assessment, since 1990:

- primary school enrolments increased by some 82 million children;
- developing countries as a whole achieved an average net enrolment ratio in excess of 80%;
- there was a modest improvement in gender equality in primary enrolment in many regions, with 44 million more girls in school in 1998 than in 1990;
- repetition and dropout rates declined;
- early childhood care and education expanded modestly, and mainly in urban areas; of the more than 800 million children under 6 years of age, fewer than a third benefit today from any form of early childhood education;

- the overall adult literacy rate rose to 85% for men and to 74% for women, but this is far from the goal of reducing adult illiteracy rates to half of its 1990 level;

- growth in non-formal education and skills training was slow.

5. According to the latest UNESCO estimates, and if current trends continue, by the year 2010 the adult illiterate population would represent 830 million people and the proportion may decrease only from 20% to 17% (namely one in every six adults would still be illiterate). On the other hand, meeting the basic literacy needs of children, young people and adults has become an increasingly complex endeavour, in the context of increased education levels required by modern societies as well as the more complex nature of literacy in order to deal with its more sophisticated applications, including the emergence of new information and communication technologies.

6. This is an unacceptable situation in a world where the access to and processing of information and knowledge is the basis of opportunity and growth. The decade opens a critical window for change – a chance to give further impetus to the commitments of Dakar. This chance must not be missed. The decade must take up the challenge to put in place measures and resources which will lead both to the meeting of the international target in terms of percentage, and to a reduction in absolute numbers. Annex I illustrates graphically the clear shortfall in meeting the 2015 target if there is no change in current trends.

7. Over the last few decades, the year 2000 emerged as a horizon against which mankind projected some of its most important aspirations, universal literacy one of them. However, at the turn of the century literacy for all – children, youth and adults – is still an unaccomplished goal and an ever moving target. A combination of ambitious goals, insufficient and parallel efforts, inadequate resources and strategies, and continued under-estimation of the magnitude and complexity of the task, is likely to explain this situation. Lessons learnt over these past decades show, in any case, that meeting the goal of universal literacy calls not only for more and better efforts but for renewed political will and for doing things differently at all levels: locally, nationally and internationally. There is an urgent need for **a renewed commitment to literacy for all** through a major new worldwide initiative that focuses on literacy as an integral component of the global and renewed commitment for Education for All (EFA) and for social development.

8. Literacy policies and programmes today require going beyond the limited view of literacy that has dominated in the past. Literacy for all requires **a renewed vision of literacy**, which will foster cultural identity, democratic participation and citizenship, tolerance and respect for others, social development, peace and progress. It must admit that literacy is not confined to any particular age (childhood or adulthood), institution (i.e. the school system) or sector (i.e. education); that it is related to various dimensions of personal and social life and development; and that it is a life-learning process. Such renewed vision towards literacy for all calls for renewed modalities of operations, monitoring and accountability procedures and mechanisms.

- **Why** a United Nations literacy decade?

Because universal literacy – for children, young people and adults – remains a major quantitative and qualitative challenge for both developing and industrialized countries.

Because literacy is a fundamental human right, a basic learning need, and the key to learning to learn.

Because knowledge and experience have shown that the battle for literacy requires intensive, focused and sustained efforts beyond one-shot programmes, projects or campaigns.

Because the United Nations and its specialized agencies offer the only universal forum to develop strategies of access to the right to education which is the fundamental human right and specifically for education for all as understood by the World Declaration on Education for All, Jomtien, 1990, and confirmed by the World Education Forum, Dakar, 2000.

Aims

9. This United Nations initiative aims at **voice for all, learning for all** through a decade **for literacy for all.** The decade is designed to give greater thrust to achieving international development targets, and to give priority to make opportunities available where currently they are not: for the poorest and most marginalized people.

(a) **Voice for all** – In a globalizing world, the voice of the poor and marginalized is often lost, becoming socially invisible and politically silent. Literacy for all is a key to enabling expression of identity and participation in debate in today's knowledge-based society. Literacy is the crucial first step in basic education which is "an indispensable means for effective participation in the societies and economies of the twenty-first century" (Dakar Framework, para. 6). Tomorrow's generation of active citizens depends on quality literacy learning for today's children. Literacy as written communication empowers people to express and share their own dynamic ways of knowing, their own social realities. Through literacy in their own and other languages, people build a culturally specific knowledge base as a deliberate process, and give new value to local knowledge, enabling it to circulate more widely and to serve as a basis for creative confrontation with other people's knowledge. Literacy enables people to be active participants in democratic processes, exercising the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

(b) **Learning for all** – Literacy is the first step towards sustainable learning, towards an education "geared to tapping each individual's talents and potential, and developing learners' personalities, so that they can improve their lives and transform their societies" (Dakar Framework, para. 3). Literacy enables access to bodies of knowledge from other horizons and empowers learners, both adults and children, to make a critical assessment of its usefulness and value. Literacy helps construct and reinforce lifelong learning for all.

(c) **Literacy for all: a renewed vision** – To reach voice for all, learning for all, literacy for all, will:

- require a renewed commitment from all: national governments, national societies, local communities and international agencies;
- transcend age groups; it is the foundation of lifelong learning, a key to inter- and cross-generational learning;
- include *all*: children, young people and adults, girls and boys, women and men, rural and urban, countries in the South and in the North;
- ensure effective and sustainable literacy levels: this implies ensuring adequate conditions and opportunities for literacy development in the family, the community, the workplace, the school system, the media;
- necessitate active policies and collective efforts not only towards literacy acquisition, but towards plural and meaningful uses of literacy as a means of expression, communication and lifelong learning.

(d) **A decade for ALL** – Efforts thus far have failed to offer literacy opportunities to certain groups of people: women and female youth, the urban and rural poor, minorities and indigenous peoples, those in inaccessible regions and post-conflict areas, prisoners and many others. Literacy is a key part of the struggle to alleviate poverty by increasing the control of the poor over their own lives. For education for all efforts to be truly **inclusive of ALL**, the decade focuses on these groups in particular.

10. Towards the vision of literacy for all, with particular focus on those groups of people for whom current strategies have failed, the decade will:

(a) strengthen the **political will**, both of national governments and the international community, to commit resources of all kinds to improving literacy rates; this will be based on a heightened awareness of the literacy need and an increased recognition of its central importance; it will also work for the effectiveness of primary education in ensuring sustainable literacy practices;

(b) develop more **inclusive policy-making environments** in which active and wide-ranging participation in literacy promotion can take place, in particular to develop partnerships, resources and innovative approaches for reaching the poorest and most marginalized groups, and for seeking alternative school and non-school approaches to learning;

(c) devise and design **new strategies**, especially at national level, so that local actors are empowered to offer relevant, high-quality opportunities to gain literacy skills, linked to poverty alleviation.

Guiding principles

11. The following guiding principles serve to channel the efforts of the decade, giving focus to the energies of the various actors.

(a) **Rights-based**: the right to learn and to an education is the starting point. Literacy is a fundamental part of that right. Every individual has the right to write and read for their own purposes. It is therefore not an option, but an obligation on governments, civil society and the international community to actualize that right.

(b) **Access-driven**: tireless efforts must be made to ensure that no-one is out of reach of opportunities to acquire literacy skills; barriers of all kinds – social, geographical, gender-related, cultural, linguistic, ethnic, economic – must be overcome.

(c) **Poverty-focused**: literacy efforts must be part of an integrated approach to poverty eradication, aiming at halving the number of those living on $1/day or less by 2015. This will require the pro-active development of links to other sectors, such as health, food production, micro-enterprise and skills training.

(d) **Partnership-directed**: working together is the only way to ensure maximum impact and the most effective use of resources. Partnerships must be developed, particularly at national level, between government, civil society, the private sector and local communities on the basis of regular and open dialogue.

(e) **Quality-minded**: only an education of quality will make any difference in the long run; sustained use of literacy will be based on high quality input (teaching, animation), relevant content and the promotion of a local literate environment.

(f) **Learner-centred**: the context and profile of learners, both adults and children, must shape the process and purpose of literacy acquisition; the nature of local literacies must be discovered and respected; the oral use of languages will determine multilingual approaches, and participatory learning processes will build on existing knowledge.

(g) **Community-wide**: learning opportunities must be structured with regard to the whole community – children and adults, women and men, old and young. The lines of demarcation between formal and non-formal modes must be revisited and new approaches found to promote a community-wide learning environment.

(h) **"Literate environment"**: efforts towards universal literacy require not only increased enrolment in school or in youth and adult education programmes. Adequate and stimulating literate environments – at home, in the classroom, in the workplace, in the community, in libraries, in play and sports grounds, etc. – are essential to literacy acquisition, development and use.

(i) **Impact-oriented**: all actions will be judged on their impact at the grassroots; sustained local ownership of literacy efforts, with appropriate support, will raise awareness of opportunities and threats in achieving maximum impact and lead to lesson-learning and evaluation.

Key implementation strategies

12. Achieving literacy for all means addressing multiple and very differentiated target groups and contexts, making use of various learning institutions and systems available, and devising differentiated strategies, contents and mechanisms, appropriate and relevant to each of them at local, national, regional and global levels.

(a) **Demand and country-driven interventions** – The ownership of the decade should remain country-driven – bottom-up rather than top-down. Within a unified global framework, national literacy for all plans and activities will be defined by countries as part of their national education for all plans according to their specific conditions, needs and possibilities. Each country and each community should be free to define which sectors of the population to include and prioritize under the ten-year literacy plan, and which strategy to adopt in order to make literacy for all a reality.

(b) **Build on what exists** – All countries are engaged in school and out-of-school literacy provision and development, and many have innovative policies and experiences to consolidate. Thus, rather than creating new or ad hoc structures or programmes, efforts must build on what exists, strengthening, expanding or redirecting it, as needed. A key to success lies precisely in merging literacy decade activities with the regular life of families, schools, local and national communities, and within the agendas of international organizations.

(c) **Cutting across sectors, institutions and agents** – Literacy is related to various dimensions of personal and social life and development. Thus literacy efforts must be related not only to education but also to a comprehensive package of economic, social and cultural policies. Furthermore, literacy acquisition, development and use can no longer be viewed as the responsibility of a single institution, sector or educational modality. Neither the school system nor non-formal education programmes can accomplish this task in isolation. It requires complementarity and synergy of action among governments, NGOs, universities, public and private organizations and civil society at large. Advancing firmly towards literacy for all requires large-scale efforts supported by wide and sustained social mobilization at the local, national and global levels, going beyond education as a sector and include broad social, cultural and economic institutions and policies.

(d) **Comprehensive, flexible and compensatory** – National literacy for all plans and strategies must be flexible so as to incorporate the inputs from civil society and from lessons learnt along its implementation process, as well as the new circumstances and developments that emerge during the decade. Also, in order to avoid further discrimination of the most disadvantaged areas and groups, special measures must be taken and resources allocated to compensate regional and social imbalances between areas and local communities.

(e) **Area- and community-based** – Actions at the local level must be rooted in the respective community so that:

- decisions are taken in a genuinely participatory process where all relevant community agents and institutions are involved;
- the plan and subsequent actions respond to the specific characteristics, needs and assets of each community and area;
- convergence, partnership and complementarity among the various community institutions and agents is facilitated and materialized;
- monitoring and accountability mechanisms are clearly defined at the local level, within a framework of autonomy and responsibility.

Coordination mechanisms

13. The Dakar Framework for Action makes it clear that progress towards EFA goals will be country-driven and based on productive and mutually supportive partnerships. It emphasizes that the principal actors are at the national level: governments and their institutions, civil society and NGOs, communities and their organizations, the private sector. Other partners, such as aid agencies and the United Nations system must act to support and optimize educational efforts at the national level. The decade marshals energies of the international community to that end.

14. At national level the key partners will be:

(a) National governments: governments must ensure that literacy is placed at the centre of basic education policies and efforts for all ages, through approaches including as well as bridging between formal or non-formal systems. They must also ensure that such policies address primarily the most neglected and disadvantaged groups, for reasons of income, age, gender, ethnicity or any other condition.

(b) Civil society: literacy for all requires wide social participation and responsibility. Non-governmental and community-based organizations working with adults and children at the grassroots, families, schools, educational, cultural and religious institutions, libraries, academic and research centres, the mass media, private enterprises, social organizations and sports clubs, all have a place and a role to play in this endeavour.

Through national EFA platforms bringing all the relevant actors together in sustained dialogue and policy formulation. The establishment of these platforms, where they do not yet exist, was envisaged at Dakar and will be a high priority at the start of the decade.

At national level, all the partners will work together in the planning, implementation and evaluation of literacy efforts, as part of the larger EFA dialogue platform. State and civil society must renew their interest in literacy promotion and become critical partners in this endeavour.

15. At the international level, UNESCO will lead the coordination of the decade in accordance with the United Nations resolution proposing the decade and within the coordination framework of the EFA processes. This coordination will build on partnerships among:

(a) UNESCO and its institutes, such as UIE (UNESCO Institute for Education) (lifelong learning), UIS (UNESCO Institute for Statistics) (monitoring), IBE (International Bureau for Education) (curriculum content), IIEP (UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning) (training), UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, WHO and other agencies of the United Nations system and the World Bank; regional organizations, networks and mechanisms, and regional development banks: Organizations at regional and international level will focus on joint and cooperative action to build capacity at national level to achieve the expected outcomes of the decade.

(b) at the regional and international levels, cooperation will be developed through dialogue within EFA structures (such as the EFA working group) and through the ongoing interaction between professionals in the different agencies. Each agency should appoint a "focal point person" to ensure consistent coordination of literacy support efforts.

Expected outcomes

16. The coordinated efforts of the international community should ensure that the decade results in the following seven outcomes:

(a) **Baseline knowledge**: a clearer understanding of the structure of illiteracies, building on the EFA 2000 Assessment and addressing issues hitherto not adequately addressed, for example: the constraints on female literacy acquisition in specific contexts; the percentage of the world's illiterate population made up of minority language groups; the percentage of adult illiteracy made up of partially schooled youth; approaches to secure the formal/non-formal interfaces and more generally to redress the imbalance in resource allocations between the two sectors.

(b) **Policy development**: a viable policy-making framework, with regional and international support to national-level initiatives to develop and elaborate those policies – based on dialogue in national EFA platforms and resulting in national literacy for all plans as part of national EFA plans.

(c) **Mobilization**: a clear prioritization at national level of the particular population groups where special literacy efforts are required, resulting in targeted action. This will involve government, civil society and others acting together; at a local level it will mean stronger school-community links and community-wide learning.

(d) **Strategy development**: increased capacity in designing context-sensitive strategies, taking account of diversity at subnational levels. Strategy decisions will focus above all on locally identified needs and be based on broad consultation.

(e) **Quality improvement**: quality will be crucial to sustaining literacy processes in communities. It is not enough to multiply literacy opportunities without also addressing the quality of input to learners and of the materials available in the local environment. Thus improved and increased training for schoolteachers and adult educators will be essential, particularly with regard to innovative pedagogical approaches, such as multilingual approaches which incorporate the mother tongue, interactive learning methodologies, the use and promotion of local knowledge and culture in materials and in the teaching/learning process, the development of school-community links with a view to strengthening life-wide learning processes.

(f) **Impact on poverty reduction**: conditions for sustaining literate environments to promote the functional use of literacy skills. In culturally and linguistically sensitive ways, literacy practices and materials will connect with life skills which enable individuals and communities to break the cycle of poverty and pursue broad social development goals.

(g) **Use of information technologies**: appropriate and effective use of new information technologies in two ways:

(i) at international, regional and national levels virtual fora and discussion groups should be set up to exchange good practice and share information on strategies, problems and progress;

(ii) at the level of learners, it is urgent to develop and apply new delivery mechanisms to reach marginalized and poor groups and communities. IT

must be seen as a learning tool which supports rather than threatens the social and cultural environment and advances not only literacy but also empowerment.

Recommended actions

17. The following set of actions is designed to lead to the outcomes listed above. They are time bound (see possible time frame below) and phased over the whole decade:

(a) **Capacity-building for baseline knowledge**: national research capacity will be strengthened through regional and national workshops, focusing on local priorities and majoring on methodology and analysis. Data and the resulting analysis will serve to identify target groups, resource availability and needs, and will serve as a planning tool.

(b) **Organization of policy fora**: to build common understanding, joint ownership and collective commitment to implement the policies and plans agreed upon using the national and regional EFA forums and meetings, national literacy for all policies and plans will be developed, in the context of overall education for all planning. These fora will involve government departments, civil society, the private sector and local representatives of international agencies.

(c) **Springboard professional consultations**: to mobilize all the actors and energies available. These consultations, at national and subnational levels, will take place early in the decade. Discussions will focus on the vision for the use of relevant literacies in a literate environment, and on what each partner can bring to the process of making the vision a reality in particular contexts. This will involve a clear demonstration of feasible methods and a realistic inventory of available resources.

(d) **Strategic implementation and cooperation**: progress in literacy for all will only be made if specific strategic plans are in place to reach the hard-to-reach. Using the baseline research and based on the policies and national plans, implementation will require intensive dialogue with other literacy stakeholders, such as those working with cultural aspects of learning and development, language issues in literacy, role of learning in participatory development, media (radio, television, press, Internet).

(e) **Capacity-building for quality**: regional workshops to design quality training programmes will equip and stimulate national literacy trainers in approaches which enable communities and institutions (traditional and recent/officiaily recognized) to promote a sustainable literate environment, based on the affirmation of local knowledge and on self-confident cultural expression.

(f) **Information and exchange**: there are huge differences between the effectiveness of literacy efforts and the development of literate environments in different regions and countries. Knowledge-sharing, networking, South-South and South-North links will give the opportunity for educators and trainers to visualize radically different ways of promoting literacy. UNESCO will seek funds to set up strategic exchanges, and use the virtual forum (see (g) below) and other pilot projects to enable greater information-sharing on good practice.

(g) **Use of IT**:

(i) UNESCO will create a database and linked virtual forum on literacy needs (linked to UIS databases), literacy practices and problems. It will enable interactive discussion around literacy themes;

(ii) UNESCO will examine the possibility of launching a multi-year research and experimentation programme, together with other partners to develop an understanding and clear strategies on the use of IT as a learning tool for literacy learners and neo-literates, in the context of local creativity and self-expression, not merely as a means of access to exogenous material on the Internet.

(h) **Celebration**: A distinctive feature of the decade will be regular thematic celebration, focused each year on International Literacy Day. It will be a means to express and generate enthusiasm for learning and literacy amongst learners, facilitators and all those involved. Thus, celebration at national and community level is the most important since it is there that progress can be most clearly seen. Celebration will not mask the enormous needs nor cover up the need for regular critical analysis of the process and progress of literacy. Rather, it will give an opportunity at every level to mark significant progress in the local context and generate further energy for the next year.

UNESCO will have a special role in raising the profile of a particular aspect of the literacy effort each year, as a theme to celebrate, such as gender equity, diversity, facilitators and teachers, creative writing, and others (see Annex II). Among other initiatives, this will mean the promotion of wide media coverage of local situations, supported by press packs and thematic background materials. This international activity will aim to give prominence and encouragement to national accomplishments. Regions and countries will be encouraged to pick up the theme in their own way and for local purposes.

Possible time frame

18. It is proposed that the decade should start in 2002. Each International Literacy Day will be a milestone and will provide the opportunity to assess, critique and celebrate progress during the decade. The final event will take place on 8 September 2012 at the end of the tenth year.

19. The Plan of Action proposes concrete and specific timed events and activities to take place throughout the decade. The chart in Annex II presents a possible sequencing over the ten years.

Monitoring and evaluation

20. Monitoring and evaluation will serve to assess, both during the decade and at its end, the progress the world makes towards the United Nations goals of eradicating illiteracy, and as part of that examine indicators relating to reaching gender equity, guaranteeing the right to education, ensuring sustainable development, and improving the quality of the lives of the poor and marginalized. To achieve this, monitoring and evaluation processes will, through periodic assessment, focus on three related aspects of literacy:

(a) the change in the absolute numbers and in the percentages of the literate population;

(b) the relative contribution of formal and non-formal education to attaining literacy;

(c) the impact of literacy on the quality of people's lives.

These indicators will require different methods and the involvement of different partners.

21. UIS within its EFA observatory will play a special role in establishing valid quantitative indicators, particularly to link literacy outputs and achievements with other sectors, e.g. progress on health indicators, income generation, political participation, cultural self-expression. Literacy data will become increasingly available as part of the EFA monitoring process and such data will be tagged and tracked over the decade.

22. Improving impact indicators will require qualitative and ethnographic approaches. To achieve this, UNESCO/UIS should build a cooperative programme with a range of other agencies and partners, such as civil society and NGOs, universities and research institutes. These partnerships will focus on developing a consensus on what indicators to establish and how data will be collected over the decade to arrive at a longitudinal assessment of the value of literacy. Thus literacy experience will be documented in depth, through a wide range of diverse case studies, country-wide analyses and regional comparisons.

23. The organization, process and cooperation of the decade itself will be evaluated, at the mid-point and at the end. In addition, a subgroup of the EFA working group will examine progress annually and propose course corrections along the way as necessary.

24. At the end of the decade substantial progress should have been made towards the 2015 goal of achieving a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy – on a straight-line projection we should be three quarters of the way there, both in terms of school-age children and newly literate youth and adults. Gender equity in primary schooling should have been attained in 2005 according to the Dakar Framework for Action. Above all, the decade should have had an impact on the quality of lives of the poor and marginalized, enabling large numbers to break out of the cycle of poverty and deprivation. How then might we follow up on the decade?

Follow-up to the decade

25. Much depends on how far these ambitious goals have been met. Even allowing for their achievement, there will still be enormous efforts to be made. How will the decade have equipped us better to go on with the challenge? Literacy efforts should, by 2012, be enhanced by:

(a) a clearer and more detailed analysis of the challenge;

(b) greater collective commitment, political will and results;

(c) stronger and more specific national policies and plans (and planning capacity);

(d) a heavier emphasis on the quality of educational programmes (teachers, materials, etc.);

(e) a comprehensive programme to foster non-formal education as one pillar of literacy efforts;

(f) the integration of IT into learning strategies and as delivery mechanisms on an increasingly broad basis.

26. In view of the remaining challenge, the spirit and the momentum of the decade must continue. The achievements must be sustained and the new commitments written into regular

programmes and budgets. The increased capacity and political will should continue to inspire and enable further efforts. The EFA platforms at national level, the working group at international level, and UNESCO's own sectoral programmes focused on EFA goals will provide a continuing framework, strengthened by the outcomes of the decade.

27. The decade will only have been effective if there is sustained and sustainable literacy acquisition and use in thousands of local communities around the world. Thus its continued impact will be seen in empowered communities using and celebrating their own literacies and passing them on to the next generation.

28. In light of the above, the Executive Board may wish to consider the following decision:

The Executive Board,

1. Recalling 159 EX/Decision 7.1.3,

2. Having examined document 161 EX/7,

3. Further recalling the commitments made at the World Education Forum, Dakar, April 2000,

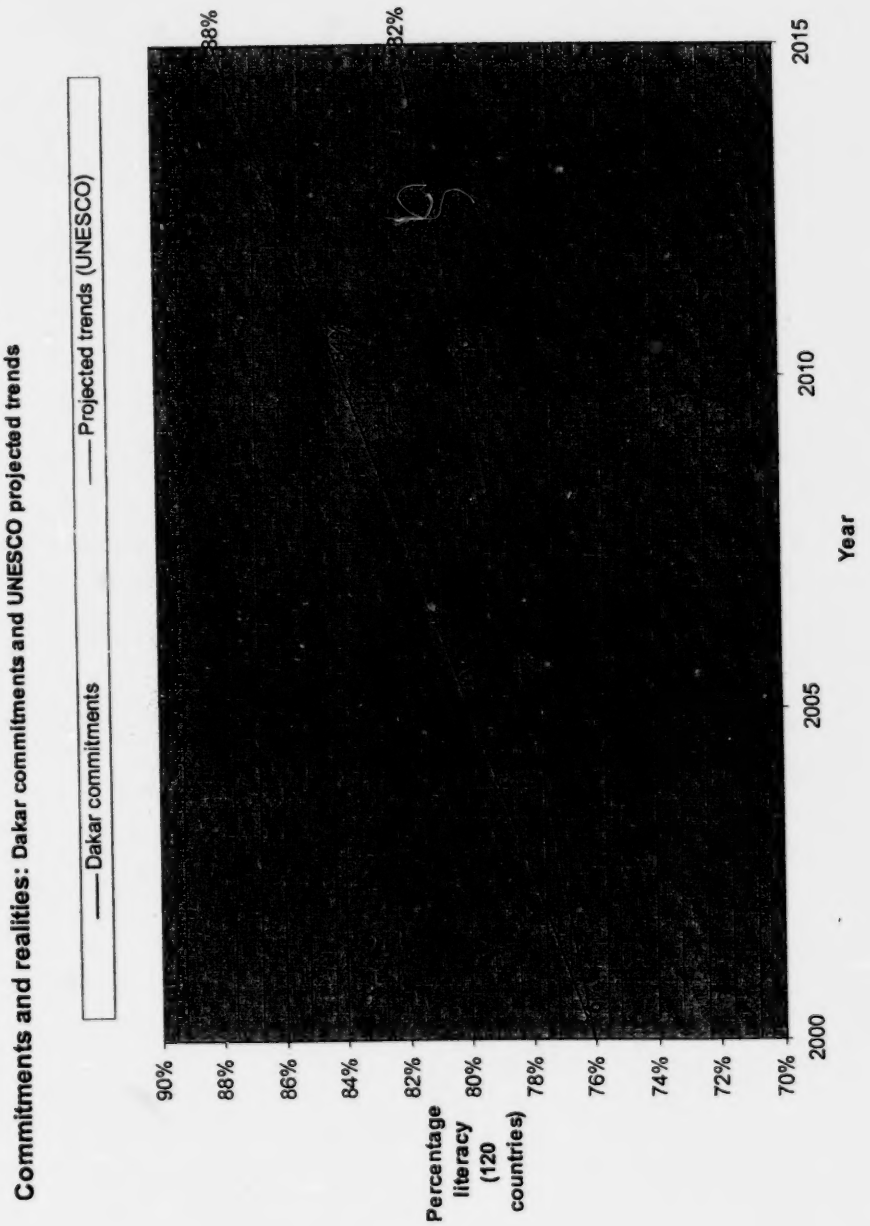
4. Acknowledging the centrality of literacy to basic education, including formal and non-formal education, lifelong learning and social development;

5. Recognizes the urgent need for refocusing in a global and concerted manner on literacy as an integral component of Education for All;

6. Appeals to Member States to give particular attention and support to the item on a United Nations literacy decade which will be placed on the agenda of the fifty-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly;

7. Authorizes the Director-General to submit the proposed draft plan of action for a United Nations literacy decade, taking into account the comments and observations of the Executive Board at its 161st session, to the fifty-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council.

ANNEX I


Commitments and realities: Dakar commitments and UNESCO projected trends
Dakar commitments
Projected trends (UNESCO)
88%
82%
90%
88%
86%
84%
82%
80%
78%
76%
74%
72%
70%
Percentage literacy (120 countries)
2000
2005
2010
2015
Year

ANNEX II

A proposed timed plan of decade activities and events

Begin Sept 2002-	2002-2003 YEAR 1	2003-2004 YEAR 2	2004-2005 YEAR 3	2005-2006 YEAR 4	2006-2007 YEAR 5	2007-2008 YEAR 6	2008-2009 YEAR 7	2009-2010 YEAR 8	2010-2011 YEAR 9
Development Goals				Gender Equality Education Goals	Proposal: International Gender Equality in Eduation Conference				
1. Baseline Research	Research Workshops								
2. Policy Forums	National Forums	National Forums Regional Forums	National Forums	National Forums Regional Forum	National Forums	National Forums Regional Forum	National Forums	National Forums Regional Forum	National Forums
3. Mobilization: National and Sub-national Springboard Consultations	Consultations	Consultations	Consultations		Consultations		Consultations		Consultations
4. Strategic Implementation and Cooperation	Sustained cooperation and dialogue								
5. Regional Training Programme Design Workshops		Workshops		Workshops			Workshops		
6. Information and Exchange	Sustained Strategic Exchanges								
7. Information Technology Use a)	Database Creation	Sustained Virtual Forum							
b)	Five year reseach and experimentation programme								
International Literacy Day Activities	8 September 2003: Gender Equity	8 September 2004: Diversity	8 September 2005: Creative Literacy	8 September 2006: Teachers and Facilitators	8 September 2007: Half-way celebration	8 September 2008: Quality	8 September 2009: Participation	8 September 2010: Literacy for Health	8 September 2011: Materials and Literature

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